

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4600

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 5752

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT YO AL

SUBJ: ALBANIA

1. DURING OCT 23 CALL ON MAHMUT BAKALI, PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF KOSOVO, AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT REPORTED CHANGES IN ALBANIA. BAKALI SAID THERE HAVE BEEN ENORMOUS POLITICAL DISLOCATIONS ON A LARGE FRONT. DISLOCATIONS HAD BEGUN IN INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES UNDER SLOGANS DIRECTED AGAINST BOURGEOIS AND LIBERAL TENDENCIES WHICH MEANT INFLUENCES FROM YUGOSLAVIA AND GREECE. HOWEVER, ALBANIANS LATER CONCLUDED THAT REAL THREAT WAS DANGER OF PRO-SOVIET TENDENCIES AND SHAKE-UP WAS NOW CONTINUING IN GOVT AND ECONOMIC SPHERE. THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CHANGES IN THE BUREAUCRACY.

2. BAKALI SAID HE WAS NOT CERTAIN WHERE CHANGES WERE
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LEADING BUT HE THOUGHT THAT MEASURES UNDERTAKEN BY

THE PARTY HAVE NOT ENDANGERED ALBANIA'S INTERNAL POLITICAL STUMILI YET HE REMARKED THAT BENEFICIAL POLITICAL EFFECTS HAD ALWAYS EMERGED FROM PREVIOUS CHANGES. NEW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WAS ONLY 41 AND HAD INSTILLED NEW VITALITY. SOVIETS MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TROUBLES IN THE ALBANIAN MILITARY FORCES, BUT THE ARMY HAD EMERGED STRONGER.

3. A SIMILAR SITUATION OBTAINED IN INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES, BAKALI CONTINUED. THE MANY CHANGES IN THE UNIVERSITY HAD SUCCEEDED IN CLEANING OUT BUREAUCRATS WHO HAD BEEN SUBSTITUTED WITH TOUGHER, BETTER QUALIFIED PERSONNEL. IT WAS HIS OPINION, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO RADICAL CHANGES WITH THE ALBANIAN SYSTEM ITSELF; INSTEAD IT WAS BEING "REVITALIZED".

4. ON STATUS OF YUGOSLAV RELATIONS WITH ALBANIA, BAKALI SAID RELATIONS "WERE NOT BAD"; THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE IN PEACE AND THERE WAS POLITICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEM. HE SAID THAT A HIGH DEGREE OF ALBANIAN CONTROL REMAINED ON THE FRONTIER. IT WAS THE MOST CLOSED OF YUGOSLAV BORDERS, ALTHOUGH INCREASED ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND SPORT EXCHANGES HAVE IMPROVED THE SITUATION OF FIVE YEARS AGO. (PER SEPTEL, IT IS CLEAR TO US THAT THERE STILL ARE SERIOUS YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN BILATERAL PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY ON NATIONALITIES ISSUE.)

5. ASKED WHY ALBANIANS REFUSED TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND THE USSR, BAKALI REPLIED HE UNDERSTOOD ALBANIAN THINKING ON THE SOVIET UNION AND DIDN'T BLAME THEM. ALBANIANS THINK SOVIETS HAVE "PRETENSIONS" OVER THEM. AS FOR U.S. A SPECIAL PASSAGE IN A SPEECH BY HOXHA HAD EXPLAINED WHY THE ALBANIANS DID NOT WANT TO RESUME RELATIONS BUT THESE ARGUMENTS BELONG TO THE PAST AND BAKALI DID NOT KNOW THE RIGHT ANSWER.

6. AMBASSADOR SAID WE WERE ENCOURAGED THAT YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN RELATIONS WERE IMPROVING. BAKALI REPLIED THAT ALBANIAN STATEMENTS RECOGNIZE INTER-CONNECTION OF YUGOSLAV AND ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE. HE ANTICIPATED CONTINUING BUT NOT SPECTACULAR
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PROGRESS IN YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN RELATIONS.

7. BAKALI SAID ALBANIANS NOT READY FOR ANY MULTI-LATERAL STEPS. BILATERALLY, HE PERSONALLY EXPECTED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN EVENTUAL ALBANIAN OPENING TO THE U.S. BUT THE ALBANIANS WOULD FIRST EXPAND CONTACTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE FRG. HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT ANY

SUCH STEPS ALTHOUGH THE FORM COULD INITIALLY SEEM STRANGE.

8. THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM IN ALBANIA, BAKALI EXPLAINED, WAS WITH ECONOMY. THIS YEAR'S PLAN PROJECTED A RATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FOUR PERCENT, NOT ENOUGH FOR A SMALL COUNTRY. CAPITAL ACCUMULATION IS INADEQUATE. THE NEED FOR CAPITAL WILL PROVOKE AND ALBANIAN OPENING TO THE WEST, PERHAPS IN AN IRRATIONAL WAY SUCH AS REQUESTING REPARATIONS FROM GERMANY AND THE UK. THE ALBANIANS DO NOT LIVE IN A STATE OF ILLUSION BUT THEY PROPOSE TO USE THIS KIND OF APPROACH TO BEGIN CONTACTS WITH SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES. BAKALI EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE A SHARP REACTION AGAINST SUCH AN APPROACH. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST TO SIT DOWN AND TALK.

9. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE U.S. POSTURE TOWARD ALBANIA AT PRESENT TIME SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE PASSIVE BUT WITH AN OPEN DOOR. BOTH SOVIETS AND CHINESE REPORTEDLY TAKING THEIR LUMPS IN PURSUIT OF ALBANIAN FAVOR--LET THEM BE SUITORS AND U.S. MAY EVENTUALLY BE ONE WHO IS SOUGHT.
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